

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 301738Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 212

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR GEOWT

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 2267

GUATEMALA FOR ROCAP

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, HO

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF ELVIR

1. POLOFF AND HONDURAN/EL SALVADOR OIC WACKERBARTH
MET WITH HONDURAN ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF CESAR ELVIR
SIERRA MORNING OF MAY 29. TOPICS DISCUSSED WERE LAND
INVASIONS AND AGRARIAN REFORM LAW, NEGOTIATIONS WITH
EL SALVADOR AND UB PAYMENT.

2. ELVIR DESCRIBED MEETING WITH PEASANT AND LABOR
ORGANIZATIONS EARLIER IN WEEK AS VERY PRODUCTIVE. HE
STATED THAT GOH STRESSED ITS INTENTION AND DESIRE TO
MOVE AHEAD ON AGRARIAN REFORM, BUT WITHIN THE PROVISIONS
OF AGRARIAN REFORM LAW. HE NOTED THAT GOVERNMENT
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COULD NOT TOLERATE ILLEGAL INVASIONS BECAUSE TO DO SO

WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS ON PART OF

NEW REGIME. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE OBSERVED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION NOT BE INTERPRETED AS IMPLYING A RETREAT ON AGRARIAN REFORM QUESTION. HE ADDED THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THE PEASANT AND LABOR ORGAN-

IZATIONS UNDERSTOOD GOVERNMENT'S POSITION AND WOULD BE COOPERATIVE IN FUTURE.

3. ELVIR ACCOUNTED THIS TRIP TO EL SALVADOR IN MID-APRIL TO MEET WITH SALVADORAN COUNTERPARTS. HE BELIEVES

MEETING WAS VERY SUCCESSFUL NOT ONLY IN PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH A PERSONAL WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARMED FORCES LEADERS, BUT IN CONTRIBUTING TO ATMOSPHERE FOR RESOLUTION OF DISPUTE. ELVIR STATED THAT ARMED FORCES ON BOTH SIDES WISH TO DEFUSE MILITARY ASPECTS OF DISPUTE BY MAINTAINING CLOSE CONTACT TO BETTER ENABLE FOREIGN MINISTERS TO RESOLVE THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS IN THE DISPUTE WHICH ARE POLITICAL. HE SAID

THAT THE SALVADORAN OFFICERS TOLD HIM THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO TRY TO REACH A SETTLEMENT QUICKLY BECAUSE BY SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER THE SALVADORAN MUNICIPAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTION CAMPAIGN WOULD BE UNDER WAY AND THIS WOULD COMPLICATE MATTERS POLITICALLY. ELVIR ADDED THAT POTENTIAL FOR

POLITICAL COMPLICATIONS IN REACHING A SETTLEMENT WERE EQUALLY SERIOUS IN HONDURAS. HE SAID HE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE INITIATIVE MADE BY FOREIGN MINISTER GALVEZ BEFORE COMMITTEE OF SEVEN LAST WEEK WOULD LEAD TO PRODUCTIVE NEGOTIATIONS.

4. ON THE QUESTION OF THE UB PAYMENT, ELVIR STATED THAT DESPITE THE INVESTIGATING COMMISSION'S EXHAUSTIVE CONFIDENTIAL

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INVESTIGATION OF THE BRIBE IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE THE FINAL RECIPIENT OF THE PAYMENT. HE ADDED THAT THE COMMISSION HAD HIRED A SWISS LAW FIRM WHICH WAS PRESSING SWISS AUTHORITIES FOR FURTHER ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT THE DEPOSIT. AS FAR AS IMPLICATIONS FOR UB OPERATIONS IN HONDURAS WERE CONCERNED, HE FELT

THAT NO DECISIONS WOULD BE MADE UNTIL THE BANANA COMMISSION LOOKING INTO THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE COMPANIES IN HONDURAS COMPLETED ITS REPORT WHICH WAS EXPECTED WITHIN 45 DAYS. HE FELT THAT THE BANANA COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD BE WIDELY ACCEPTED BECAUSE ALL IMPORTANT SECTORS OF SOCIETY WERE REPRESENTED ON THE COMMISSION.

5. COMMENT: IN DISCUSSING ALL OF THESE ISSUES, ELVIR EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT POLITICAL PRESSURES COULD AFFECT

DECISIONS THAT WILL HAVE TO BE MADE. ELVIR STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF TAKING VARIOUS SOCIAL SECTORS INTO ACCOUNT

WHEN DECIDING ON WHAT POLICIES TO ADOPT. OBVIOUSLY HE RECOGNIZES THAT NOT ALL SOCIAL SECTORS WILL AGREE ON A GIVEN SUBJECT. HOWEVER, HE, AND BY EXTENSION, THE OTHER LT. COLONELS, ARE DESIROUS OF BUILDING AS GREAT A BASE OF SUPPORT AS POSSIBLE FOR THE DECISIONS THEY MAKE.
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